

This Week in Washington

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Pombo supports permanent tax relief

Congressman Richard Pombo voted last week to make permanent the tax relief provisions enacted into law last June. The bill, H.R. 583, the Tax Relief Guarantee Act of 2002, was approved by a margin of 229-198.

Americans will lose the tax relief promised last year, and their ability to plan for the future will be significantly impacted. If this package is not approved by the Senate, on January 1, 2011:

- New, lower individual income tax rate reductions will disappear.
- The new \$1,000 child tax credit will fall back to only \$500.
- Significant measures to reduce the marriage tax penalty will end.
- Retirement security will be impacted when the new IRA contribution limit of \$5,000 falls back to only \$2,000.
- The Death Tax will be resurrected.
- Increased contributions to Education IRAs from \$500 to \$2,000 and tax-free distributions from qualified tuition plans will revert back.
- Greater deductibility of student loan interest will end.
- Adoption credit and exclusion will be reduced from \$10,000 to \$5,000.

"The fact that the tax relief package was not permanent can be blamed on typical Washington, D.C. games, and the Senate should be ashamed of itself," Pombo stated. "I can't wait to see how anyone explains voting to increase taxes on our lowest earning taxpayers by fifty percent, cutting the child care tax credit, cutting education and student loan contributions and resurrecting the death tax."

Due to an arcane Senate rule, the tax relief provisions in last year's bill, H.R. 1836, expire or "sunset" on December 31, 2010. This so-called Senate Byrd Rule permits Senators to raise a point of order against "extraneous" provisions. Under this rule, revenue provisions with a revenue effect outside the 10-year revenue-estimating period are by definition "extraneous." H.R. 1836 was a "budget reconciliation bill" to which the Senate Byrd Rule applied.

More paperwork for Americans

The Office of Management and Budget reveals that Americans spent 1.5 billion more hours this past year complying with federal paperwork requirements than they did a decade ago. The average American household now dedicates 24 hours per year to federal paperwork.

"The American people are spending more time than ever before dealing with federal red tape," says John Graham with the Office of Info. & Regulatory Affairs. Roughly 80 percent of the overall burden is attributable to the 17,000-page federal tax code. Much of the remaining 20 percent of paper is shuffled to Americans by the Health and Human Services and Labor department and the EPA

Reprinted from the Washington Times

Taxes and Death

"Taxes have become so confusing the IRS now estimates that the average taxpayer will have to spend 28 hours and 6 minutes on the 1040 form and necessary record-keeping, including the common schedules for interest, dividends, capital gains and deductions. This waste of manpower now tops an estimated 6.1 billion hours on tax forms and record-keeping, accounting for 80 percent of the federal government's entire paperwork burden."

David Keating of the National Taxpayers Union (www.ntu.org)

Today in History

1846 - The Mexican-American War ignited as a result of disputes over claims to Texas boundaries.

1867 - Tokyo was opened for foreign trade.

1898 - The US declared war on Spain.

1940 - Al Pacino was born.

1945 - Delegates from about 50 countries met in San Francisco to organize the United Nations.

1953 - U.S. Senator Wayne Morse ended the longest speech in U.S. Senate history. The speech on the Offshore Oil Bill lasted 22 hours and 26 minutes.

1967 - Colorado Governor John Love signed the first law legalizing abortion in the U.S. The law was limited to therapeutic abortions when agreed to, unanimously, by a panel of three physicians.

1987 - In Washington, DC, 100,000 people protested US policy in Central America.

1988 - In Israel, John "Ivan the Terrible" Demjanuk was sentenced to death as a Nazi war criminal.

1992 - Islamic forces in Afghanistan took control of most of the capital of Kabul following the collapse of the Communist government.

1998 - U.S. first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton on was questioned by Whitewater prosecutors on videotape about her work as a private lawyer for the failed savings and loan at the center of the investigation.

From www.on-this-day.com

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Democrats' complaint

"Usually, it is the GOP that complains that their press coverage is unfair and biased toward the opposite point of view. In an unusual move, House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt, Missouri Democrat, and Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, South Dakota Democrat, have written to the heads of CNN, MSNBC and the Fox News Channel complaining about the way the three cable news channels are covering Democrats on Capitol Hill," United Press International reports in its Capital Comment column.

"We are writing to bring to your attention an issue that has become more pronounced in recent months: the lack of television coverage of press events featuring elected leaders of the Democratic Party," the letter begins.

"Claiming 'The statistics we have demonstrate this disparity,' the two Democrats complain that administration officials were covered live on CNN 157 times while Democrats were only covered seven times over an approximately four-month period. The two men also say, 'Anecdotal evidence indicates that Fox News and MSNBC coverage follows the same pattern.'

"They close by saying that they 'Look forward to hearing their thoughts on this issue.' So do a lot of other people."

Reprinted from the Washington Times

'Fool from the east'

"Has celebrity environmentalist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. taken leave of his senses, or did he ever have any to begin with?" asks Walter Olson, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and editor of Overlawyered.com.

"The question arises, given the furor that has broken out in Iowa after Kennedy flew in to inform state residents that - as the Des Moines Register last week quoted him as saying - 'large-scale hog producers are a greater threat to the United States and U.S. democracy than Osama bin Laden and his terrorist network.'

"Kennedy offered that bizarre comparison at an April 5 rally on hog-farm issues in Clear Lake, Iowa, sponsored by his Waterkeeper Alliance.

"With all the adoring press coverage he gets in his back yard, Kennedy may have had no idea how his remarks would go over in a Midwestern state that prides itself on both patriotism and pork production."

For example, Des Moines Register political columnist David Yepsen referred to Mr. Kennedy as "this fool from the East."

Reprinted from the Washington Times

A federal bureaucratic web

The General Accounting Office determined last month that researchers from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), US Forest Service (USFS) and local scientists submitted "unauthorized hair samples" in 1999 and fall 2000 while surveying endangered Canada lynx in Washington state's national forests. Rather than wild specimens, these hairs were from a stuffed bobcat and a captive lynx. The scientists claimed they were testing an outside laboratory's accuracy. However, in a March 1 memo to Secretary Gale Norton, Interior IG Earl Devaney, said he believes that "parts of the story told by the FWS biologists involved stretch credulity." He also criticized the agency's "cultural bias against holding employees accountable for their behavior" and called for "more meaningful punishment for those previously counseled." So far, one FWS scientist concurrently received a

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Weekly Quotes

"The United States is the only country where it takes more brains to figure your tax than to earn the money to pay it."

- **Edward J. Gurney**

"We will...never bring up the permanent tax cut the president is advocating. It's bad policy, it's wrong and it compounds the budget disaster we are now facing."

- **Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.)**

"When my son is mad at me and he looks at me and says, 'Mom, don't spin me,' it just hurts me."

- **Karen Hughes - White House communications chief**

Wordsmith

red tape

Function: noun

Etymology: from the red tape formerly used to bind legal documents in England

Date: 1736

: official routine or procedure marked by excessive complexity which results in delay or inaction

Reprinted from www.m-w.com

By the Numbers

"A new poll shows most Americans give Ronald Reagan a higher retrospective job approval rating than when he was in office. In contrast, Bill Clinton's retrospective rating slipped lower than his job approval rating while in office, according to a Gallup poll."

CNSNews.com, 4/8/02

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cash award while under scrutiny. Meanwhile, the USFS personnel have endured "verbal counseling." "Had the fraud not been exposed," says James M. Taylor of Chicago's free-market Heartland Institute, the improper lynx hairs could have justified "bans on skiing, snowmobiling, driving, logging and livestock grazing." Federal judge Lawrence Margolis ruled that USFS officials knowingly used false spotted owl population data to trigger the cancellation of four logging sales. Judge Margolis called USFS's behavior "arbitrary, capricious and without rational basis." As the Washington Times reported, the federal government agreed in March to compensate the Wetsel-Oviatt Lumber Company \$9.5 million for these canceled sales.

USFS also got caught misleading Congress when it reported in 2000 that 920 million people had visited America's national forests. Actually, there were only 209 million visitors. Pleading dyslexia, the USFS called this a typo. How convenient. High visitor numbers are used to support federal land grabs and bigger USFS budgets. Apparently, no one has suffered for cooking the federal guest book.

"People may not see the significance of falsifying an endangered species biological survey," Rep. Richard Pombo (R., Calif.) tells me. "But the result of that is a severe impact on local economies when an area is declared habitat... As timber sales are canceled, not only do the timber companies go out of business, but the small businesses associated with logging go out of business as well."

By Deroy Murdock

Reprinted from the National Review Online www.nationalreview.com

Clinton vandals

"The General Accounting Office has found that departing Clinton aides vandalized the White House and Old Executive Office Building, stealing two historic doorknobs, scrawling obscene graffiti on walls and inflicting \$14,000 worth of damage," the Washington Times reports. We don't wish to dwell on this comparatively trivial story, but since Clinton defenders periodically trot out the claim that the vandalism is a myth, we thought it worth mentioning."

Reprinted from OpinionJournal.com

Baby, you can drive my car

"The government owns more cars and trucks than Hertz (the largest car rental company in the world) does after a buildup in the 1990s that left one vehicle for every three federal employees, a White House inventory showed. It showed the federal fleet includes 602,626 vehicles...at a cost of \$2.29 billion a year."

Reprinted from the Associated Press

Comments from the District

"We are constantly manipulated by the oil companies." - **Beverly Willitts** - 4/8/02

"The Palestinians have not made good on the numerous peace accords." - **Robert Hallam** - 4/7/02

"I am in favor of airport workers being American Citizens." - **Charles Bucchino** - 4/11/02

"Free trade is fine, but without a free flow of information, the market is not free." - **Frank Mills** - 4/6/02

"We need to do everything here at home to be free of our dependence for oil." - **Charlene Astorga** - 4/7/02

"It is so important for me to know how fresh the produce and meat is that I am purchasing." - **Edith Bael** - 4/2/02

"Our tax dollars directly support Israel and we are morally responsible for Israeli actions." - **Ali Juma** - 4/8/02

"I urge you all to "stay the course" in these trying times and oppose any attempt to usurp our sovereignty." - **Pete Klein** - 4/6/02

"I would like to know where food comes from that I am consuming." - **John Stevenson** - 4/9/02

"We now know from files the FBI discovered from Arafat's compound, that he is a global terrorist leader." - **Dennis LaRue** - 4/5/02

You can view more comments on Congressman Pombo's web site bulletin board at the link here:

<http://www.house.gov/pombo/board/board2002/board2002.htm>